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KT photo | **Tim Bath**

House of Burgess: Presidential recounts fall apart

Trump opposes Michigan, Pennsylvania, Wisconsin audits

By Rob Burgess
Tribune columnist

As I wrote in my Nov. 30 column, “State recounts to begin,” Green Party candidate Dr. Jill Stein started a fundraiser Nov. 23 to “demand recounts in Wisconsin and Michigan and support the voter-initiated effort in Pennsylvania.”

“The grassroots push raised an approximate total of \$7.33 million from nearly 161,300 donors across the nation, representing the largest-ever people-powered effort to verify the vote of a presidential election in American history,” stated a Dec. 13 press release. “The average donation was \$45.43, with roughly three-quarters of all donations under \$100.”

So, what did all that green buy?

MICHIGAN

Mechanical irregularities were a hallmark of the states where anyone bothered to examine the results. Whether it’s just outdated equipment, human error or Russia’s tampering with the election in favor of Republican candidate Donald Trump, about which the CIA and FBI are now in agreement, this only proves why we should have an audit of the entire system in every state.

“In 248 [Detroit] precincts, there were a total of 782 more votes tabulated by voting machines than the number of voters listed as picking up ballots in the precincts’ poll books,” reported John Wisely and JC Reindl of the Detroit Free Press on Monday.

Trump had no interest in an examination of his narrow victory in the state.

“Trump has sued to stop the recount of the vote in Michigan. Trump filed the lawsuit in the Michigan Court of Appeals,” reported WXYZ-TV on Dec. 2.

“The suit comes after Michigan’s elections board deadlocked on Trump’s request to prevent a recount, which means it will start next week unless the courts intervene.”

Not that these discrepancies mattered.

“The Michigan Supreme Court denied Stein’s appeal to restart a partially completed presidential election recount, meaning President-elect Trump’s 10,704-vote victory over Democrat Hillary Clinton stands,” reported Jonathan Oosting of The Detroit News on Dec. 9. “In a 3-2 ruling, the state’s highest court said the Michigan Court of Appeals correctly ruled that Stein was ineligible to pursue a recount. ... The 1,600 new votes discovered during the partial recount of 2.1 million votes shows there is ‘a real problem’ with aging optical voting scanner machines across the state, [Stein attorney Mark] Brewer said, bemoaning the fact that those votes and any others that could have been found will not count because the recount was halted.”

PENNSYLVANIA

The Keystone State’s recount never even began.

“In Pennsylvania, a federal judge issued a stinging rejection of a Green Party-backed request to recount paper ballots in that state’s presidential election and scan some counties’ election systems for signs of hacking,” reported The Associated Press on Dec. 12.

WISCONSIN

The vote count in Wisconsin changed slightly, but not in the way anyone seemed to expect.

“The Wisconsin recount that was completed increased Trump’s victory margin there by 131 votes. He won 1,405,284 votes — 22,748 more than Clinton,” reported The Los Angeles Times’ Michael Finnegan on Dec. 12.

Trump received this news with his signature good-natured charm.

“The Dems and Green Party can now rest,” he tweeted. “Scam!”

There’s just one problem with this result: There’s no telling how accurate it was. With Stein’s appeal denied Nov. 30, there was no formalized system.

“Officials in each of Wisconsin’s 72 counties would decide on their own whether to do their recounts of the 2.98 million statewide votes by machine or by hand, with dozens of counties expected to hand count the paper ballots,” reported Jason Stein and Patrick Marley of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel on Nov. 29.

I’m not as interested in what the results of these examinations show as I am in it being done right. If ballots are hand-counted in every municipality of all 50 states and Washington, D.C., and it shows Trump won by even larger margins, so be it. But, why then is he the one so against the idea of the proper recount we’re apparently never going to get?

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